

IMPROVEMENT REPORTS.

TOWN COUNCIL GAVE HEARINGS MONDAY NIGHT IN SEVERAL CASES.

No Objections to Charles Street Sewer or Delaware Avenue Grading Work—Amended Report on Olive Street Opening Calls Fourth Objections—Numerous Objections to the Linden Avenue Improvement Assessment.

Monday night was the date fixed by the Town Council for a hearing on a number of public improvements recently made or contemplated, among them the Charles Street sewer, Delaware Avenue grading, Olive Street opening, and the Linden Avenue improvement. Town Clerk Johnson reported that no objections had been filed in the matter of the Charles Street sewer, and it was referred to the Board of Assessors to levy the assessment. No objections were received by the clerk in the Delaware Avenue work, and that matter was also referred to the Board of Assessors to levy the assessment.

In the case of the amended report of the Board of Assessors on the opening of Olive Street in the Second District of the Third Ward, L. F. Hinrichs, through his counsel, Messrs. Pile & Pile, objected to the award of damages allowed for property to be taken for the opening of the street. Amelia R. Lockwood, Charles Gresham and Jacob Hambacher also filed objections against the acceptance of the report. No definite action was taken by the Council on the report pending an investigation of the objections.

In the case of the Linden Avenue improvement objections to the assessment levied were filed by Margaret Richards, Jane Powers, Alzina G. Baker, E. J. Cadmus, and William H. Swain. A number of Linden Avenue property-owners were present at the meeting and desirous of being heard in regard to the work done and the amount of assessment levied against their property. The receipt of the numerous objections and the attitude of the property-owners on the street in regard to the assessment led to an animated discussion among the Councilmen, and it was decided to make the matter a special subject of consideration at a meeting of the Council to be held Wednesday night to which all the property-owners on the street are invited, and the members of the Board of Assessors and Town Engineer Olmsted are also invited to be present.

The Town Council met in regular session Monday night and transacted considerable business. In addition to giving hearings on several improvements the Council fixed the financial budget for the current year and received the applications for licenses for saloons and tins and taverns in the town. The list of applicants, the location of their places, and the names of bondsmen are officially published in this issue of the CITIZEN.

Councilman Moore of the Legal Committee made the usual motion deferring action on the Essex Cross Railway Company's franchise application.

Councilman Conlan of the Finance Committee submitted the monthly report of Town Treasurer Harry L. Osborne for the month of May.

Chief of Police Collins reported twenty-two arrests during the month of May and forty dollars collected in fines.

Councilman Moore of the Sidewalk Committee reported that repairs to the sidewalk on Montgomery Street near the canal lock had been made. On his suggestion the matter of replacing the guard fence along the sides of the approaches to the Berkeley Avenue canal bridge was referred to the Road Committee. Mr. Moore stated that there had been a narrow escape from a fatality at the Berkeley Avenue bridge when a little girl going down the hill on her bicycle lost control of the machine and went over the embankment.

Mr. Moore reported that the North Jersey Street Railway Company had complied with the Council's request for additional safeguards at the Bloomfield Avenue crossing of the Erie Railroad, but the Orange and Passaic Valley Company had as yet paid no attention to a similar request with respect to the Glenwood Avenue crossing of the Lackawanna line.

The transfer of Peter A. Wade's license to William Johnson was voted. Chairman Peterson asked if any citizens present had any objections to make to the transfer and there was no response.

Councilman Walker brought up the matter of the money due the county by the town for work done on roads under the provisions of the State Aid Road Act. Mr. Walker said the county officials would not object to the deferment of the payment of the debt for another year. The money has been due several years now.

An owner of property in Grove Street requested the Council to take immediate action on a petition for a sewer in that

street that was submitted to the Council several weeks ago. He said that he had three houses in the street, for which he wanted sewer connections. The matter was referred to the Sewer Committee with power.

Financial Budget Fixed.

The Town Council at a regular meeting on Monday night fixed the financial budget for the current year by adopting the report of the Finance Committee presented by Chairman Conlan of that committee at a previous meeting. The appropriations as adopted are as follows: Incidentals, \$13,000; poor, \$3,000; road repairs, \$10,000; police, \$5,800; water, \$7,500; fire, \$3,500; bonds and interest, \$21,000; street lighting, \$10,000; schools, \$37,000.

The only item in the budget over which there was a difference of opinion was that for road repairs. Councilman Farrand named the sum of \$8,000 and was supported by Councilman Moore. Messrs. Conlan and Harrison urged the adopting of the amount named in the report. In the vote on the appropriation Mr. Farrand's amendment was lost by a vote of 4 to 3. Councilman Chabot voting with Messrs. Farrand and Moore.

Councilman Harrison, Chairman of the Police Committee, when the appropriation for that purpose was under consideration, stated that the large force of laborers that would be employed along the Newark piers through this town this summer would probably necessitate increased police service, and he was of the opinion that \$10,000 ought to be voted for those purposes, but if the Council would agree to support the Police Committee in any future contingency it might require a transfer of additional money to the police account, he would not urge any increase of the appropriation at present.

It was stated that the appropriations voted together with the amount that would go to the county would result in a tax rate of 2.96, an increase of six points over last year. The exact amount of the tax rate, however, will not be known until after the Board of Assessors determine the amount of tax rates.

Too Much Light.

An Ashland Avenue family did not like the rays from an incandescent electric light focused on the piazza of their house and had the side of the globe towards their house painted. A citizen whose dwelling was on the opposite side was not pleased with having the rays of the light thus concentrated upon his place, and he painted the opposite side of the lamp globe. The attention of the police department was called to the extinguished light, and the parties who had painted the globe were notified that they were liable to a penalty for violating a town ordinance prohibiting interference with the street lights.

THE TAX RATE.

REPORTED RATE OF \$2.96 ONLY GUESS WORK.

Increased Appropriations for Town School and County Purposes Indicate a Higher Figure—State Board of Taxation Handicaps Increase in Tax Rates—Assessors Should Stand Firm.

It has been unofficially stated that the tax rate for the current year will be \$2.96, an increase of only six points over last year. In the face of increased appropriations for town, school and county purposes it is not very clear how the tax rate above named is arrived at.

There can be no official proclamation of the tax rate, Clerk Gilbert of the Board of Assessors says, until the Board has completed its work and definitely announced the precise amount of tax rates. This will not be done until sometime in July. The outlook for a tax rate under 3 per cent is not encouraging. The Town Council, it is true, has made a lower appropriation for incidental purposes, but the probability is that the Council has underestimated the draughts that will be made upon the incidental account during the year. Board of Health salaries and election expenses will run up a large part of the appropriation just made, and the Council has some projects under way that are likely to prove a drain on the incidental account. It will be noted that no mention is made of floating indebtedness outstanding, and the probability is that the Council does not intend to attempt a reduction of that burden this year. There is a considerable sum of money due to the county from the town which does not appear in any statement of the town's financial condition, but which is in reality a part of the floating indebtedness.

Recent adverse decisions on the part of the State Board of Taxation against the assessment work of the local Board of Assessors is an obstacle that hampers the local Board in its work. If it were not for the certainty that the State Board of Taxation will upset any increases in the tax valuations of property by the Board of Assessors it is very likely that a considerable increase would be made in valuations. The State Board is now the Mecca for aggrieved taxpayers from this town and the success their appeals have met with has resulted in a defiant attitude on their part against the local Assessors, but the injury to the town resulting from the State Board's action is not limited to a few individuals, the impression has got abroad that the State Board is much easier to appeal to than the local Board of Commissioners of Appeal and more readily disposed to make reductions. But this is not the most detrimental feature of the State Board's action. The State Board establishes standards of valuation which must be considered in making the general assessment. Where the State Board passes upon and reduces an appellant's property valuation all the adjoining property owners expect and demand that the reduced valuation be made the standard for the entire neighborhood. In the face of this condition of affairs there is not much encouragement for a lower tax rate under the circumstances.

It appears that the proper course for the Board of Assessors to take is to adhere to the valuations that in their judgment were fair two years ago, the State Board to the contrary notwithstanding.

Not Stone Blind as to Stone Walls.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CITIZEN:

Sir: The letter written by Town Surveyor Olmsted and read by the Clerk at the Town Council meeting Wednesday night has put the laugh on the residents of Linden Avenue, and I beg a portion of your space to reply to the charge of Rip Van Winkleism and retrieve our lost good name. Were it written by one in the humble position of an unadorned citizen we should recover quickly, but see, it bears the official stamp and we are lost!

I quote, "The property-owners along the way did not know very often that their walk was being relaid, and I have no doubt some now think that their walk was not relaid when it was." Since this has become public gossip our residents have withdrawn from a public view and among us all not one is there so bold as to admit his home to be among the gawdy dwellings of Linden Avenue. In the event of such an arraignment going on the against us I believe that an act should be made in the form of exonerating circumstances and a claim made for at least a share of common intelligence, yet I must admit that the Linden Avenue job does not reflect credit upon any one connected therewith unless I make an exception in the case of the contractor.

But ought we to be credited with ordinary intelligence and activity? We have been out with our spades searching for some odd thousand cubic feet of grading; our tape lines have failed to find the proper amounts of sidewalk and gutters, yet they must be there for they are there! Our eyes look and our feet search for some flag stones at the crossing of Thomas Street and Linden Avenue, yet they must be there, only we can neither see nor feel them. Our memories have failed to recall the correct number of trees that were removed; yet they, too, must have once graced our street. Undoubtedly they were removed during one of our intermittent periods of lethargy. I am venturesome enough to use the word intermittent for I hope we are now awake. Let us set forth here a few of the things that we want to know about.

First—Mr. Olmsted says: "In the matter of the improvements the petition did not set forth specifically as it should the manner in which the assessments were to be made, or how the improvements were to be charged up against the property-owners. I had no way of ascertaining at the time the improvements were taking place how the assessments were to be made." Now we know and all the town officials who were in office when that petition was presented knew that it was a facsimile of petitions under which similar work had been done in the town of Arlington, and it was understood at the time that the Arlington method of procedure was to be followed.

Second—Mr. Olmsted says: "It never occurred to me that the property-owners were to be entitled to a rebate because of the conditions as they were found in the street when the improvements were being made."

Mr. Olmsted is flatly contradicted by Mr. Conlan, who said Monday night that, as chairman of the Sidewalk Committee when the Linden Avenue work was begun he asked Mr. Olmsted if he had taken careful note of the condition of the street and enumerated what each individual property-owner possessed in the way of flagstone, curbing and rubble gutter. Of course in the case of people who were incapable of counsel business as to whether a flagstone was on its end or on its flat, the failure to make such data was not inexcusable for it may not have been deemed necessary.

Third—in alluding to the procedure as to how the assessment was to be made Mr. Olmsted says: "I had no one to counsel with that knew any different." Where was the Clerk of the Board of Assessors? He has pointed out to us how the assessment ought not to be made. Why did not Mr. Olmsted consult with Mr. Gilbert and get the benefit of his knowledge.

Fourth—Mr. Olmsted says: "Long after the work was completed it was decided that another method would be adopted, and I was called upon to report what was done for each individual owner

along the street."

Here is a contradiction of Mr. Olmsted's previous statement and demonstrates that there was some one in authority whose advice he should have sought in making the report for the assessors, for in the last statement it appears that his individual work and opinions were thrown aside and he had to do the work all over again in accordance with the dictates of some one in power.

We are not among those who are disposed to make a scape goat of Mr. Olmsted in this Linden Avenue muddle. We regret that he has been so indiscreet as to commit himself in writing to such indefensible positions as he has assumed in this matter, but, however, it is evident that we are getting nearer to the facts in this case, and we have no doubt that when the whole matter is thoroughly sifted the people of Linden Avenue will not be the only ones wiser for the experience.

I understand our surveyor is not now with us. The spell upon us was broken about the time of his departure, and now that it is broken many of us are wondering, in explanation of his indictment against us, if he did not conceal some portions of hypnosis kind in his telescope barrel to shoot out upon the unsuspecting denizens of the street. We offer it in extenuation. A. B. HUNT.

Street Sprinkling

In fixing the appropriations for the fiscal year, the Montclair Town Council on Monday night increased the road repairs account so as to provide for the purchase of a steam road-roller at a cost not exceeding \$3,000, and the sum of \$1,500 for street sprinkling. The roller will prove a good investment, and the sprinkling service, although limited to a moderate expenditure, is at least a good nucleus, which may grow in years to come as the practicability of the service becomes more obvious.

From the experience of Glen Ridge, it would seem that the cost of street sprinkling is something less than \$100 per mile during a normal season. In response to inquiry an official of the Borough of Glen Ridge gives the following information:

"For the year ending March 1st, 1903 (a year of frequent rains), the cost of street sprinkling was \$739.65. For the previous year it was \$800.00. I do not know the mileage sprinkled. At the close of the year ending March 1st, 1900, we had 7.62-100 miles of Telford road, exclusive of Bloomfield Avenue. Several miles have been added since and have to be sprinkled."

Taking this as a basis, it may be fairly estimated that about fifteen miles of Macadam roads can be sprinkled in Montclair during the present summer season, and this will serve a large area of the most thickly settled part of the town.

New Saloons.

The delinquency of the Board of Excise to limit the saloons in Newark to about the present number is a matter of importance and general interest. The Board's action, as we understand it, is based upon the belief that the competition among brewers is increasing the number of saloons more rapidly than is healthy for legitimate business or for the welfare of the community. The number of saloons at present is given at 1,425, and, with a population of 270,000, this would make one saloon for about every 188 persons, including women and children. —Newark Call.

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people present sang "The and Blue," "Star Spangled Banner," and "Rally 'Round the Flag."

